

News Release

Senator Pete V. Domenici

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

JULY 20, 2000

SENATE APPROVES FY2001 AGRICULTURE APPROPRIATIONS BILL

WASHINGTON -- The Senate today approved a \$66 billion agriculture and nutrition funding measure that will provide funding requested by Senator Pete Domenici to support agriculture research at New Mexico State University, colonias wastewater system development, and give nutrition assistance to children and low-income families.

The Senate late Thursday night approved (79-13) the **FY 2001 Agriculture Appropriations Bill**, which now goes to a conference committee where differences in the House and Senate-versions of the measure will be reconciled.

"Agriculture remains an important pillar of New Mexico economy, and this bill provides funding to ensure that the United States remains the most prolific agrarian nation in history," Domenici said. "So much of the research being done at New Mexico State University has the potential for increasing and improving agriculture production. I'm pleased this bill provides new funding for these efforts."

"For New Mexico, this bill will also offer new hope for those Southwest border region communities that lack sufficient wastewater systems," he said. "It also provides increased funding for the federal nutrition programs that work to ensure the most needy Americans are fed."

Domenici said the bill contains, among other things:

- c \$250,000 for the **NMSU Plant, Drought, and Disease Resistance Gene Cataloging** program to develop tools to study plant genes on a large scale, and create a DNA library for plant drought and disease resistant gene cataloging;
- c \$338,000 for the **Consortium on Southwest Biotechnology Research**, which includes NMSU and Los Alamos National Laboratory, to develop plant species that can withstand arid and semi-arid conditions;
- c \$280,000 for the **New Mexico Rural Tourism Program**, a project initiated by New Mexico Cooperative Extension Services to increase tourism in rural counties with high unemployment rates; and,
- c \$197,000 for the **Range Improvement Initiative** to expand upon the existing Range Improvement Task Force.

The bill also includes \$20 million in Rural Community Advancement Program (RCAP) grant funds for colonias infrastructure projects in Southwest border states, including New Mexico. At least 35 New Mexico communities meet the "colonias" standard, defined by the lack of a potable water supply, adequate sewage systems, and

decent, safe and sanitary housing.

In addition, the bill contains continued funding for a Domenici-cosponsored program setting aside \$24 million for water and wastewater grants to Indian tribes. This new program is targeted only to the poorest tribes, which can qualify for 100-percent grants for these projects. Many New Mexico pueblos and the Navajo Nation should qualify to compete for these grant funds that will not require local matching grants, Domenici said.

The bill provides \$127,000 through the Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service to accelerate research at NMSU on phytophthora root rot, or chile wilt, which is a major concern for New Mexico chile growers. The research also focuses on soil-borne disease prevention.

The bill provides **FY2000 emergency supplemental funding** for agriculture totaling \$2.1 billion. This includes \$443 million to aid dairy producers; \$450 million for livestock assistance; \$1 million to support \$113.25 million in Rural Utilities Service programs; \$130 million for the Rural Utilities Service and the Rural Development Administration; and \$35 million through the Commodity Credit Corporation to aid peanut producers. An additional \$960 million was added on the Senate floor to meet new agriculture emergency needs.

Domenici also gained \$7.25 million in FY2000 supplemental funding to ensure that the **Radiation Exposure Compensation Act (RECA)** Trust Fund can resume paying approved claims this year. The trust fund ran out of money May 9.

Domenici also provided the following details on other agriculture and nutrition programs funded in the 2001 Agriculture Appropriations Bill:

Colonias - \$20 million within the Rural Community Advancement Program for grants for water systems to benefit the colonias along the U.S./Mexico border, the same as the current funding level.

American Indian Water and Wastewater Program: Through a Domenici-cosponsored program \$24 million is set aside within the RCAP. This new program is targeted only to the poorest tribes, which can qualify for 100-percent grants for these projects. Many New Mexico pueblos and the Navajo Nation should qualify to compete for these grant funds that will not require local matching grants. This is double the \$12 million provided in FY 2000 funding.

Plant, Drought, and Disease Resistance Gene Cataloging - \$250,000 for the **NMSU Molecular Biology Program** to continue development of tools to study plant genes on a large scale and create DNA library databases for plant drought and disease resistant gene cataloging. This is \$38,000 more than the final 2000 funding level.

Range Ecosystem Research - \$200,000 to continue research on broom snakeweed through the Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service (CSREES). Broom snakeweed is a poisonous plant that causes death and abortion in livestock and steals scarce water resources from productive range plants.

Chile Wilt Research - \$127,000, the same as the 2000 enacted level, through the CSREES to accelerate research at **NMSU** on phytophthora root rot, or chile wilt, a major concern of New Mexico chile growers. The research also focuses on soil borne disease prevention.

Cotton Ginning Research Laboratory - The bill includes report language stating that the committee expects the USDA to continue funding for ginning research for the cotton research laboratory in **Mesilla Park** at the current level.

Nematode Resistance Genetic Engineering Research - \$127,000 through the CSREES for research into the genetic engineering of plants to resist plant parasitic nematodes, which are responsible for worldwide reductions in plant productivity. **NMSU** researchers seek to use genetic engineering techniques to transfer the protecting properties from known biological enemies of nematodes to crop plants as an alternative to costly and environmentally hazardous pesticides. This research could provide alternatives to pesticide use.

Renewable Resources from Desert Plants - \$175,000 in CSREES funding to continue research on developing renewable industrial products through the use of genetic engineering technology. Such products could include high-temperature lubricants, non-polluting epoxies and industrial nylons. **NMSU** is conducting gene transfer research on the extraction of oil from jojoba.

Organic Waste Utilization - \$100,000 for this **NMSU** research program, the same as 2000.

Consortium on Southwest Biotechnology Research - \$338,000, the same as the 2000 level, is provided to continue cooperative research efforts to develop plant species that can withstand arid and semi-arid conditions. **Los Alamos National Laboratory, NMSU, Texas Tech University, the University of Arizona, and the University of California at Riverside** participate in this consortium.

Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSI) - \$3.5 million for HSI's to strengthen resident instruction at colleges and universities (including two-year colleges) with at least 25 percent Hispanic enrollment, \$650,000 above the 2000 funding level and the same as the president's request.

Extension Activities -- \$426.5 million, \$2.3 million above 2000, to continue these activities.

Indian Extension Service Activities - \$2.5 million for Indian reservation agents, an increase of \$786,000 above 2000.

Native American Institution Endowment Fund - The bill recommends \$7.1 million, an increase of \$2.5 million above the 2000 funding level, to enhance educational opportunities for Native Americans by building educational capacity at these institutions in the areas of student recruitment and retention, curricula development, faculty preparation, instruction delivery systems, and scientific instrumentation for teaching. The bill expands the use of these funds for repair and construction of facilities. The bill also has \$3.5 million for extension services at the 1994 institutions, \$1.55 million for equity grants, and \$1 million for research activities, \$500,000 above the FY2000 level.

New Mexico Rural Tourism Program - \$280,000, the same as the 2000 level, through the Extension Service to continue this rural economic development initiative. The funding will go to a pilot project to increase tourism through training, capacity building, and implementation of a comprehensive tourism marketing plan to be developed by the **New Mexico Cooperative Extension Service**.

Range Improvement Initiative - \$197,000 for the Extension Service to improve range conditions, a **NMSU**-proposed initiative that expands on the Range Improvement Task Force to include a broader western regional perspective and greater emphasis on policy analysis in an ecosystem context.

Rural Community Advancement Program (RCAP) - \$749.3 million for RCAP, \$55.6 million above 2000. It is within this program that the \$24 million set aside for American Indian tribe water and wastewater grants is provided, as established in a Domenici cosponsored program.

Rural Water Circuit Rider Program - \$9.5 million as requested by Domenici is approved for this program which supports technical assistance to rural water systems.

Distance Learning & Telemedicine Program - \$27 million is proposed through USDA to support these activities, an increase of \$6.3 million above 2000.

Wildlife Services program - \$33.8 million through the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) for operation of the Wildlife Services program and \$10.5 million for Wildlife Services methods development.

Natural Resource Conservation Service Operations - \$714.1 million for the activities of the Soil Conservation Service, an increase of \$53.3 million over 2000. The report includes language encouraging continued support by NRCS for the Southwest Strategy in New Mexico and Arizona.

Outreach for Disadvantaged Farmers/Ranchers - \$3.0 million is approved to provide assistance for disadvantaged farmers/ranchers. This program provides outreach and technical assistance to encourage and assist socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers to own and operate farms and ranches and to participate in agricultural programs. Indian tribal community colleges are experienced in providing agriculture education and outreach and technical assistance to encourage and assist socially

disadvantaged farmers and ranchers.

Feeding programs for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) - \$4.1 billion is provided for the WIC program, an increase of \$20 million over the 2000 level. This bill includes \$20 million for the WIC farmers market program, an increase of \$5 million.

Commodity Assistance Program (CAP) - \$140.3 million for the Commodity Assistance Program which includes funding for the Commodity Supplemental Food Program, the Emergency Food Assistance Program, Soup Kitchens, and food banks, an increase of \$7 million above 2000.

Child Nutrition Programs - \$4.4 billion is provided for child nutrition programs. Together with other available funds, a total of \$9.5 billion will be available in FY 2001 to fund the school lunch and breakfast programs and other nutrition programs.

Food Stamp Program - \$22.2 billion is provided for FY 2001 for food stamps.